



BRAIN FIRST PARENTING

OBSERVATION LOG

Most of us automatically assign meaning to behaviors—“He did it for attention”, “She’s not trying.” Interpreting behaviors is part of trying to make sense of the world and fit it into our understanding. The value of observing without interpreting is that it makes room for considering a different explanation, asking different questions, and reframing understanding of the meaning of behaviors.

Importance of Observation:

- Step back, depersonalize, deescalate
- Learn to see without judging
- See patterns of behaviors, what the behavior is in reaction to
- Understand where the fit is poor between expectation and cognitive skills
- Identify points of intervention
- Build on strengths
- Prevent problems, improve outcomes, build connection

This only requires five minutes a day. The goal of this exercise is to practice observing behaviors without interpreting their meaning in order to increase recognition of neurobehavioral symptoms. This, in turn, increases awareness of how brain differences apply to behaviors in different situations. Observation helps shift from reacting to behaviors to recognizing patterns of behaviors and when they occur.

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There is no one “right” way to gather information. The following are suggested guidelines:

Describe what happened. Where did you first notice agitation or frustration or dysregulation in your child? What did you see, hear? Was the behavior observed primary (brain tasks) or secondary (reaction to)?

What was the setting, or, what were the characteristics in the environment?

Time of day, day of the week, Number of people present
“Tone” of parent/adults, household/classroom
Amount of noise, other stimulation
Transition
Change in routine

What happened earlier in the day? What was coming up? Other environmental characteristics?

What characteristics associated with brain differences may play a role? Refer to your neurobehavioral screening tool, paying close attention to where you circled 4s and 5s.

What did you do? How did you feel?

Did it work? If so, why? (i.e. I saw she was overwhelmed and I used fewer words and she settled down”) If not, why not? (i.e. “I lectured and he became more agitated.”)

What’s one strength to build on and adaptation that could be made the next time?

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